

Lambda Letters Project

32605

Vol. 7, No. 1 January, 1999

www.lambdaletters.org

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Transgendered People

The Ones We've Left Behind: Your Advice Needed

We need your advice on a legislative matter. Please read this article and then register your opinion on the questionnaire at the end of the article and return it to us with your signed letters.

The transgendered portion of the LGBT community has been left far behind the rest of us in the struggle to gain full rights and respect in our nation. Table I on page 7 graphically illustrates this fact.

The election of a moderate Democrat to the governorship of California raises the possibility of enacting laws which would significantly advance the rights of lesbians and gays in our state. Several bills are being introduced in the state legislature to do just that. Unfortunately, transgendered people may again be left in the dust.

The current ban on sexual-orientation discrimination in California is weak. The ban could be strengthened by adding it to the California Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA).

Continued on page 7

"Meditations": A Response

Lavender Library, Archives
and Cultural Exchange
Sacramento, CA

by Boyce Hinman

Longtime activist and Lambda Letters member Shireen Miles wrote a response to our November editorial on the church and the LGBT community. I certainly respect her record as an activist and think anything she says deserves serious consideration. So I am delighted to share her response with you in this article.

Dear Boyce,

Activist to activist, as a longtime friend and ally of yours, and as one of the organizers of the October 16th memorial to Matthew Shepard held at Trinity Cathedral, I wanted to respond to your editorial in the November Lambda Letters Project newsletter challenging supportive churches to adopt specific, effective programs to prevent hate crimes and homophobia. For the most part, I agree with you. Words of consolation and support which are not followed by action do little to achieve change. Apparently we

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Lambda Letters Progress Report

Messages Collected

November, 1998	2,323 letters & e-mails
In all of 1998	120,288 letters & e-mails

Dollars Spent

November, 1998	\$1,998
In all of 1998	\$17,192

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

Lambda Letters Project

Statement of Purpose

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy, and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered persons, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof.

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The Lambda Letters Project does not sell or loan its mailing list to anyone. We give no information about who is, or is not, a member of the Project. We do, occasionally, send mailings on behalf of other worthwhile organizations, but this is done by our own volunteers so that no other organization has the opportunity to copy our mailing lists.

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The Demographics of AIDS

by Boyce Hinman

The fact that AIDS is still an epidemic of gigantic proportions is demonstrated by the data found at the Web page of LLEGO, the National Latina/o Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Organization—which got their data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, National AIDS Clearinghouse. LLEGO reports the following:

According to Table 2, New York and California rank highest in AIDS cases. Among the metropolitan areas, Los Angeles and San Francisco have the second and third highest number of AIDS cases in the nation (35,974 and 24,785 cases, respectively). Surprisingly, the New York City metropolitan area has almost three times as many cases as LA (97,103 cases).

Table 2. States with Highest Number of AIDS Cases

State	AIDS Cases
New York	113,549
California	101,569
Florida	62,200
Texas	42,185
New Jersey	34,871

Continued on page 9

Thanking the Postmaster General

by Carla Leek

To start the new year out on a positive note, this month's Women's issue is a thank-you letter to the United States Postal Service's Postmaster General, William J. Henderson. The USPS has successfully marketed and sold the Breast Cancer Research stamp in recent months. The stamp raises funds for breast cancer research, and raises awareness of the disease too.

The USPS was initially opposed to being tagged as a fund-raising group, but once Congress made the decision to support the stamp, the USPS complied. Raising awareness and funds nationwide is an admirable accomplishment, and raising awareness among its own employees is a good by-product. The USPS is the single largest employer in the United States.

Please sign and return the enclosed letter thanking the Postmaster General. Maybe with a little encouragement, the USPS will raise funds for AIDS research and other worthy causes!



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Domestic Partner Registry in 1999?

by *Carolynn Race*

For the first time in sixteen years, our governor's seat is filled by a supporter of the LGBT community, Governor Gray Davis. Davis, while still a moderate, is a welcome change after years of Governors Wilson and Deukmejian vetoing progressive LGBT legislation. Prior to his election, Davis stated, "For over 20 years I have fought discrimination against gays and lesbians and have strongly supported providing full legal benefits to same-gender couples. As governor, I will not only continue the fight, I will lead it!"

LGBT-friendly assemblymembers and state senators alike are capitalizing on Davis's succession by introducing bills vetoed by Wilson. Domestic partner legislation is a top priority in this legislative session: Assemblymember Carole Migden (D-San Francisco) and Senator Kevin Murray (D-Los Angeles) have already introduced legislation (A.B. 26 and S.B. 75, respectively) to launch a statewide domestic partner registry.

Both bills would define domestic partners, provide for the registration of domestic partnership for all California residents, and require health facilities to allow visitation rights for patients' domestic partners.

Migden's A.B. 26 would also require health care programs to offer identical plans for domestic partners as for heterosexual spouses. Murray's S.B. 75 would allow domestic partners the right to be included in conservatorships and statutory will forms.

Please write to your assemblymember urging support of both bills. For the full text of these bills, go on the Web to www.leginfo.ca.gov.

Protecting Minority Outreach for Public Education

by *Marty Martinez*

S.B. 44 (Polanco, D-Los Angeles) attempts to mitigate some of the damage caused by the passage of Proposition 209 in 1996. That proposition made it illegal for government agencies in California to utilize affirmative action in public employment, education and contracting. All public colleges and universities in California have been forced to scrap affirmative action programs. This has resulted in decreases in admission rates for blacks and Latinos. Some public universities have attempted to compensate for the decline by increasing outreach and recruitment efforts among minorities. However, some have argued that Proposition 209 bans even these activities.

S.B. 44 makes it a "legislative finding" that outreach and recruitment programs targeted at underrepresented minorities are not prohibited by Proposition 209. While a legislative finding does not supersede Proposition 209—which amended the state constitution and is therefore not binding—a legislative finding, supported by large majorities of legislators, could embolden state colleges and universities to pursue minority outreach programs with diminished fear that such programs would be challenged. The legislative finding may also help support a legal defense of minority outreach, should ever such a program be challenged in court.

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The Right Stuff

by Boyce Hinman

The ink was hardly dry on last month's newsletter editorial, "Meditations," when I heard of an action that clearly demonstrates what that editorial called for. It said that mainstream churches need to take more risks in support of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered people to prevent harm before it occurs, rather than merely providing comfort once it has happened.

Late last summer the National Judicial Council of the United Methodist Church ruled that any Methodist minister who performs a ceremony of holy union (that is, a marriage ceremony) for a same-gender couple shall be defrocked. On October 4, 1998, the Rev. Donald Fado of St. Marks Methodist Church in Sacramento announced in a sermon that, if asked, he would perform such a ceremony. He said of the Judicial Council's ruling, "I cannot remain silent in the face of such an injustice. I have a choice between two options. I can leave the United Methodist ministry or I can protest. I choose the latter and the way I will protest is that I will do such a service [a ceremony of holy union for a same-sex couple]."

Pastor Fado made this announcement without being asked to do so and apparently with no particular couple in mind. Shortly thereafter Jeanne Barnett and Ellie Charlton, members of his congregation and long-time members of Lambda Letters Project, asked him to marry them. He immediately agreed and the wedding was set for January 16th. The significance of the event is heightened by the fact that Jeanne is the Conference Lay Leader of the Northern California/Nevada Conference of the United Methodist Church. That makes her the highest ranking lay person in the denomination in that region.

Roughly 80 Methodist pastors from throughout Northern California and Nevada have agreed to co-



Ellie Charlton (left) and Jeanne Barnett (right)

officiate at the ceremony. As many as 1,000 people are expected to attend the ceremony. As a result there will be no way that the denomination can ignore the event or the issue that it raises. One can only hope that it will deal with it honestly and wisdom, but some have predicted that it may cause a major split among United Methodists comparable to one that occurred in 1840 when Southern Methodist Churches left the denomination because it had taken a position against slavery.

That raises an interesting issue. We received three well-written responses to "Meditations," which offered alternative views on the subject discussed in the editorial. One of those is printed elsewhere in this newsletter. Another expressed the view that gradualism in moving churches in the right direction is necessary to avoid losing potential allies among the moderates in the church. That may be true. However, someone must answer the questions, Does that gradualism violate any fundamental principles of the faith? Is that gradualism acceptable given the degree of suffering experienced by people in the queer community? Each of us must answer these questions for ourselves.



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New Donor Categories

As you may have noticed, the dollar ranges for the major donor categories, shown on page 2 of this newsletter, have changed. We did that because some of you have been so generous that the old "visionary" category did not adequately acknowledge the depth of your support. For example, in October, Paesano's Restaurant contributed \$1,500 worth of food and Eventures event planning services donated \$750 in services to our Lavender Night at the Movies. As a result, that event raised about \$1,500 for the Project.

That may seem like a lot of money. However, Lambda Letters is the only statewide organization providing a consistent, large volume of constituent mail to California's elected officials. That mail is essential to support the message brought to legislators by CAPE, the new civil rights lobby for the queer community; CHAC, the new HIV/AIDS lobbying organization; and by other groups which lobby on the issues we cover.

The next few years will demonstrate whether Lambda Letters is a passing fad or the truly professional, sustainable organization needed by our communities. The ugly truth is that building a professional sustainable program takes lots of money. As we begin the new year, please consider what you can do to help us find that financial support.

Deborah A. Brooks

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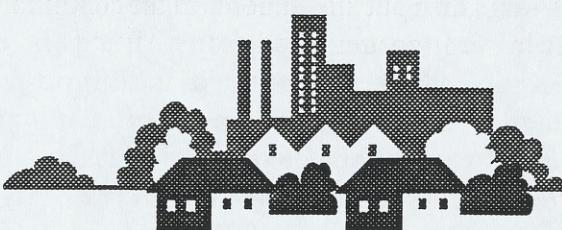
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The Ones Left Behind: Advice Needed

Continued from page 1

At a December 5th meeting of CAPE, the new statewide lobbying group, a majority of their members present voted to support legislation to add protections for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered people to the FEHA. However, respected legislative staffers who have done much of great value for our community cautioned that Governor Davis is a moderate and that adding transgendered people to a FEHA bill would probably kill it. At this point it appears that no legislator is willing to introduce a bill that adds transgendered people to the FEHA.

The issue we face is when is it time for us to risk our political capital to bring the transgendered community along with the rest of us? I'm not sure anyone knows the right answer. Should Lambda Letters forcefully advocate for the inclusion of transgendered people to any bill providing FEHA protections for lesbians and gays? If it did so, and the bill failed for that reason, there would be a lot of people angry at us. Should Lambda Letters support separate legislation to add transgendered people to FEHA? That legislation seems less likely to pass on its own. Should we simply wait until lesbians and gays are added to FEHA—hopefully in 1999—and then put the full force of the community behind a bill for transgendered people? We'd like your input. Please put a check next to the option you prefer in the list below and return it to us.



I urge Lambda Letters to...

- Support the inclusion of transgendered people along with lesbians and gays in this year's FEHA bill.
- Support the introduction of separate legislation this year adding transgendered people to the FEHA.
- Wait until next year to support legislation adding transgendered people to FEHA.

Table 1. The Road to Freedom

1960	Gay sex is illegal in virtually all states and the District of Columbia. Several states ban the serving of alcohol to known homosexuals. Lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered people are regularly arrested, and sometimes beaten, by police for simply gathering together. No laws prohibit sexual-orientation or gender-identity discrimination.
1966	City of San Diego bans cross-dressing.
1969	The Stonewall riots in New York City signal the beginning of the modern "gay rights" movement.
1972	California legislature passes legislation legalizing gay sex between consenting adults in private.
1979	California Supreme Court bans employment discrimination against lesbians and gays. Transgendered people not protected by the decision.
1979	Governor Brown issues executive order banning sexual orientation-based discrimination in California government. Transgendered people not covered.
1985/86?	California's legislature enacts the Supreme Court's 1979 decision into law, making the protections of that decision more secure. Transgendered people still not covered. Protections for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals are weak.
1989	California legislature passes Hate Crimes Statistics Act requiring the reporting and counting of sexual orientation-based hate crimes. Transgendered people not covered.
1990	Congress passes Federal Hate Crimes Statistics Act requiring the reporting and counting of sexual orientation-based hate crimes. Transgendered persons not covered.
1998	California enacts legislation providing enhanced penalties for hate crimes against transgendered people and requiring the counting and reporting of such crimes.
1999	Ten states, including California, and fifty cities and counties ban sexual orientation-based employment discrimination in private industry. No states and just a few cities ban employment discrimination against transgendered people.
	Nine states and thirty cities and counties ban sexual-orientation discrimination against their own government employees and just a few cities ban employment discrimination against transgendered people in government.
	According to the Human Rights Campaign, 320 Fortune-500 corporations offer sexual orientation protection as part of their personnel policies. Just a few companies provide similar protection for transgendered people.
	San Diego still bans cross-dressing by transgendered people.

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of your elected officials.

"Meditations": A response

Continued from page 1

differ a bit on one point, however: In the climate in which we live, I believe that promoting and celebrating diversity is not only healing, it is also a form of political action in itself. We both know that for individuals, "coming out" is an essential first step of activism. Trinity Cathedral is an example of a congregation which has, over the last few months, courageously "come out" in strong support of Sacramento's gay and lesbian community, and I believe this is just the beginning.

I would like to invite you, and any other interested persons, to attend a meeting of Integrity to see for yourself the focused, goal-oriented agenda of gay and lesbian Episcopalians, just one of many groups working for change within mainline religious groups and the broader community.

The service of remembrance for Matthew followed a number of other events held in this parish in the month of October: a speech to the congregation by an El Dorado County high school student who has been the victim of gay-bashing by his peers and who has gone on to form a Gay/Straight Alliance in his high school; a showing of the film "It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in Schools," cosponsored by GLSEN, the Gay/Lesbian/Straight Educators Network; and a presentation on [inclusiveness]

by The Rt. Reverend Edmund G. Browning, former Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church of the United States. Our community has long recognized the political importance of "coming out" as a way of making it clear that we are here, we are queer, and we are not going away. When we "come out," we also send a lifesaving message to GLBT youth that they are not alone. But "coming out" is just as important for our allies.

Just as when PFLAG members march in a gay pride parade, they are the living proof that families do not have to condemn and cast aside their gay children, it is my belief that when mainline churches are willing to speak up and be counted as staunch allies in our movement for justice—and then act on their beliefs—it will no longer be the voices of the fundamentalists that prevail.

Thanks for your challenge. It is appropriate and we intend to live up to it.

Sincerely,

Shireen Miles

P.S. Anyone interested in finding out more about Integrity can reach us at: (916) 394-1715, barb@gvn.net, or www.gvn.net/~barb.



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HIV/AIDS Issue

Continued from page 3

The Black and Latino/a communities have a rate of AIDS that far exceeds their percentage of the total U.S. population, as shown by the figures in Table 3.

The 1980s and 1990s have focused on defeating the scourge of AIDS within the gay (and largely white gay) community. Surely as we enter the new century, we must mount a thunderous attack to defeat HIV entirely, but in particular to eliminate this scourge from the person of color community as well.

Please write to Governor Gray Davis urging him to make a high priority of reducing the scourge of AIDS among people of color.

Those wishing further information about LLEGO may contact them at: 1612 K Street, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 2006; (202) 466-8240; AquiLGBT@llego.org.

Table 3.
Percentage Comparisons of AIDS Cases
Among Races

Race/Ethnicity	Percent Total Cases	Percent Population
White	45.6%	72.8%
Black	35.4%	12.1%
Latino/a	17.8%	10.9%
Asian Pacific Islander	0.7%	3.5%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.3%	0.9%

the news resource of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community

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